

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and in exchange for this use is obligated by law to serve the public interest in the local communities served by its stations. But when large segments of the airwaves (radio as well as television) are controlled by large companies, we get a homogenized and often (as in this case) highly biased message that serves the bottom line of the company and the political views of its owners, rather than the needs of the local community and our democracy. Instead of something produced at "News Central" far away, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter. Even in entertainment, local tastes differ substantially, and smaller local acts will never be heard on radio stations controlled from far away, because they cannot afford to pay for airplay.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.